

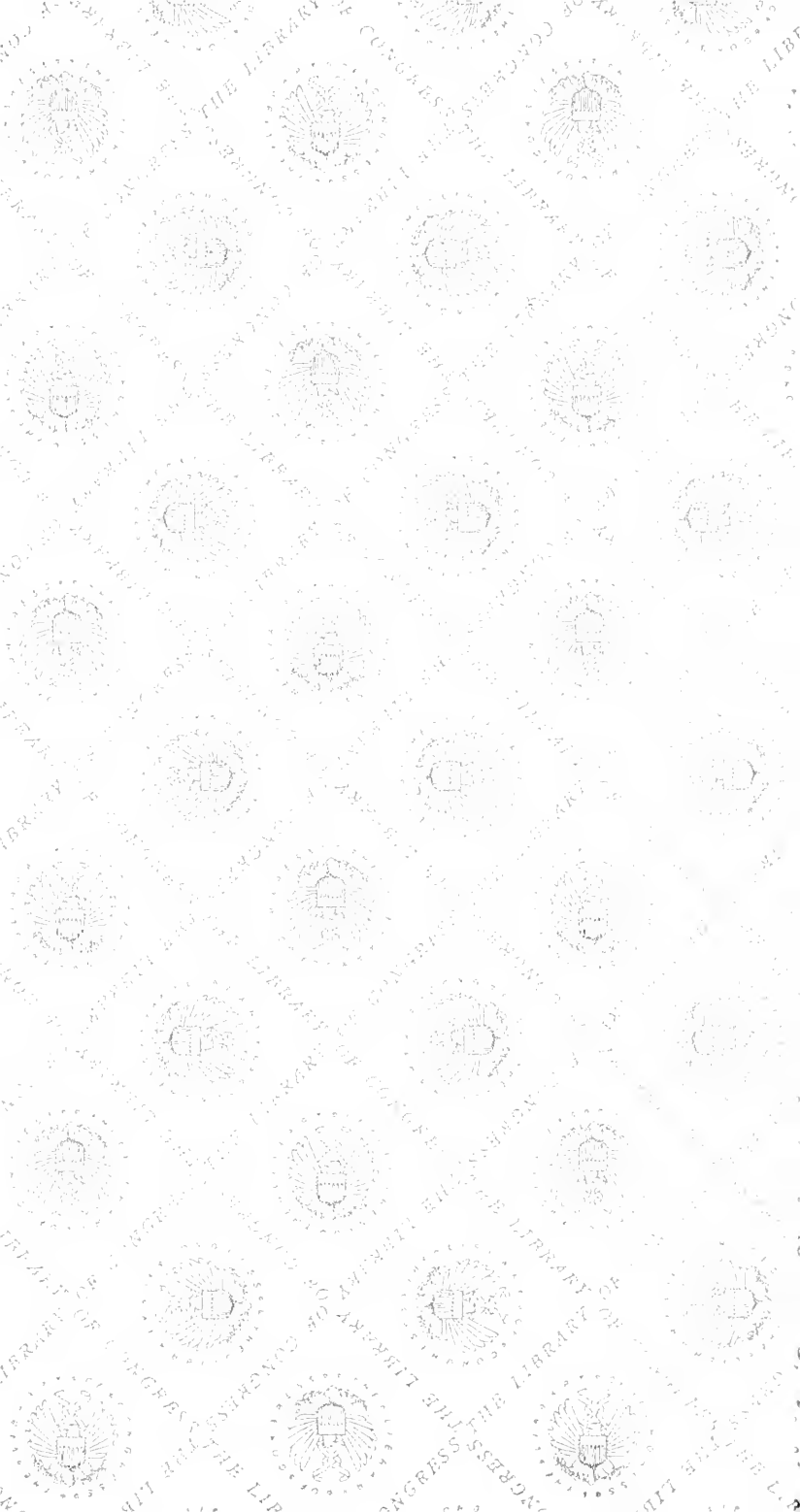
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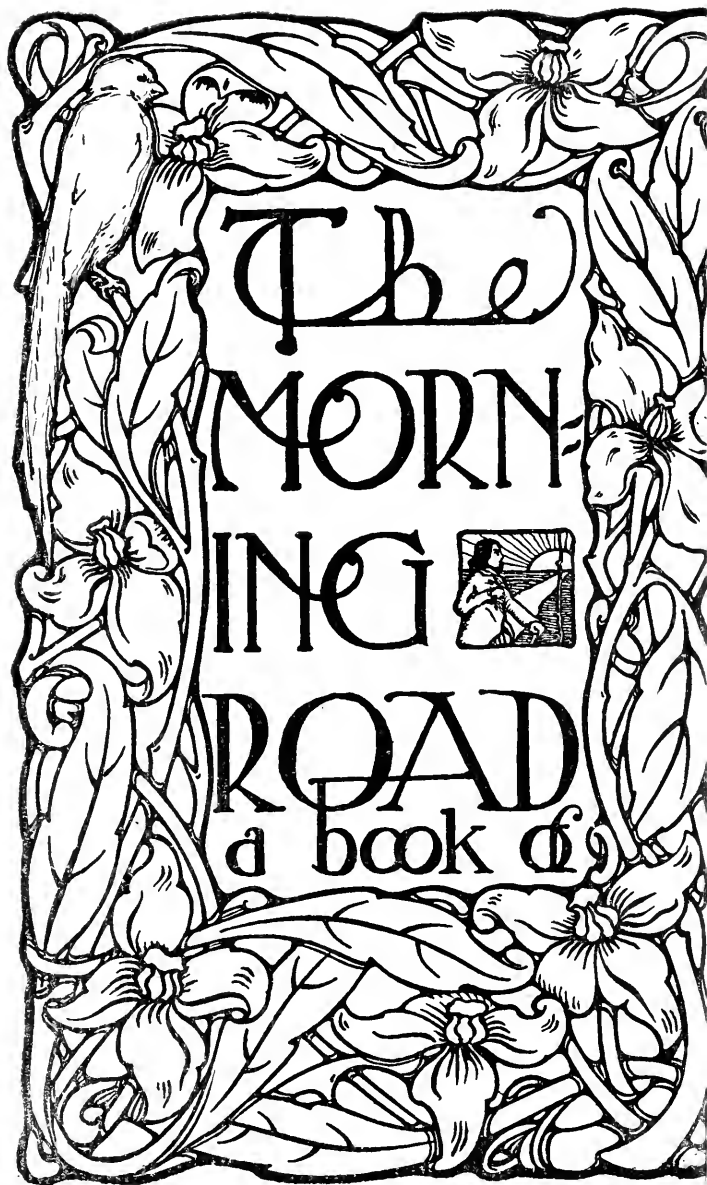




The Morning Road



The Morning Road



A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring stylized flowers, leaves, and a bird perched on a branch in the upper right corner.

VERSES

by Thos. Wood

STEVENS

& Alden Chas.

NOBLE

CHICAGO

The BLUE SKY

PRESS 1902

Contents

TITIAN THE BOY - <i>S</i>	13
A BREATH OF ORPHEUS - <i>N</i>	14
IN TIME OF REST - <i>S</i>	17
SONG OF THE SUN - <i>N</i>	19
THE SPHINX - <i>N</i>	21
ARIZONA - <i>S</i>	26
THE UNSOUGHT SHRINE - <i>S</i>	29
HER ACCOLADE - <i>N</i>	32
MAIDEN - <i>N</i>	34
THE MADNESS OF TRISTRAM - <i>S</i>	37
LIONARDO AND LISA - <i>S</i>	39
THE EXILE - <i>S</i>	42
THE DRAGON FLY - <i>S</i>	43
THE MUSE OF FOUR-YEARS-OLD - <i>N</i>	44
THE SPIRIT OF THE DUNES - <i>S</i>	45
CHANT TO DIONYSIUS - <i>S</i>	46
A PIRATE SONG - <i>N</i>	47

LYRICS

I	Sweet lady on whose teeming shrine - <i>S</i>	48
II	As the swallows on the wing - <i>N</i>	48
III	I dare not touch thy hand - <i>S</i>	49
IV	Purl of the sibilant waters - <i>N</i>	49
V	I cannot find in faith or love - <i>S</i>	50
VI	In the praise of the Queen - <i>N</i>	50
VII	Each dance we tread - <i>S</i>	51
VIII	Heart of red in swelling breast - <i>N</i>	52
IX	Faint are the lights - <i>N</i>	53
X	Princess of morning - <i>S</i>	54

BALLADES

FRIENDSHIP - <i>S</i>	55
DEAD KINGDOMS - <i>N</i>	56
CHILDHOOD - <i>N</i>	57
OLD FANCIES - <i>N</i>	58
THE BUCCANEER - <i>N</i>	59
THE GARRET - <i>S</i>	60
ECHOES - <i>N</i>	61
PING PONG - <i>N</i>	62
UNWRITTEN TALES - <i>S</i>	63

Titian, the Boy

A dreamer in the branches ponders a silent song,
A dreamer of the days of eld, young and still and
strong,

Ponders 'neath soft Italian skies the Romance of
the Fleece —

A young Venetian dreamer sees afar the Isles of
Greece.

He sees the tide-girt rocks that rim the classic land,
And, far within, the temples that the elder dream-
ers planned ;

He sees the nymphs, unmaddened, whose sight
hath maddened men,

And the brown fauns of the forest, and the naiads
of the fen.

In his ears the song of mænads around the mystic
wine

Rings clear and unforbidden from the far, forbid-
den shrine ;

He knows the soul of Delphi, whose words are all
unknown,

He feels the Grecian love of love, the Attic passion
lone.

He hears the voice of the Blind One, of falling
Eastern walls,

And a little of the wisdom that the subtle hemlock
calls —

And yet he is not Grecian, — within his dreaming
eyes

The Grecian clouds are drifting across Italian skies.

A Breath of Orpheus

Lift I the golden lyre with the ringing swaying
strings
And tune the chords to a music beyond man's ear
to gage,
And there with the breath delicious of a million
myriad Springs
I sing to my splendid goddess, — the queen of a
royal age.
Thine, thou white and stainless ! from the deeps of
the dimmer year,
Down with the whirling tempest along the ocean
grey,
Dressed in the plumes of triumph, moist with the
dew of fear,
Bright and red in the darkness, dark in the blind-
ing day,—
The song goes thrilling toward you, wheeling
aslant the wind,
Echoing through the spaces beyond the Outer
Gloom,
Thine from Persephone's garden, the place where
thou shalt find
The souls of thy former minstrels, cold in a frigid
tomb.
But mine is the fearless singing that bids old Death
beware ;
Dauntless, sullen, uncaring, flinging thy glories
free,
Heedless of doom and danger, militant unto care,
I raise my voice in a chant of lyrical praise to thee.
Thine from the womb of the desert, dim and dusty
and dread,
Under the eloquent urging of the luminous brazen
Sun,

Lost in the æons of æons that have bowed thy
glorious head
Since with the birth of the soul thy glamorous life
was begun ;
Down from the spume of the Arctic where the
night is a winter long,
Out from the swell of the surges that sweep to the
utter shore
Where the impervious beaches list to the swaying
song
Sung by undaunted sons of sires that were slain of
yore ;
Thine from the southern waters and the opening
eastern gates —
I hurl my paean to heaven and all the founts of
earth,
Up from the carven ages wherein the specter waits
Pallid and horrid and silent, the Death that is thine
from Birth.
Down from the constellations that scatter an eddy-
ing gleam
Far above and around us with reckless prodigal
hand,—
One with the breath of April to foster a poet's
dream,
Lulling the restless bosom of a newly-wakened
land ;
Thine from the House of the Morning where
Phœbus halts to kiss
The beauty of high Olympus before he takes his
flight
Buoyant and merry and daring,— where the fair
Semiramis
Envies Apollo's kisses as she yearns from the
Stygian night.

The gleaming hair of the houri is lit with a thou-
sand suns,
Her eyes flare red in the gloaming before her
house of pain
As she worships the glowing Phœbus at his splen-
did orisons —
The love of a lovelier goddess — and knows her
worship vain.
So, thine from the bright Olympus,— fairer than
fairest, thou !
Fairer than Phœbus' goddess my heart would have
thee fair,
Worthy the death of all minstrels, fit for a nation's
vow,—
Mine be the death and the pride, that thy song
outlast the air.

In Time of Rest

'Tis yours to wake within the Pearl of Dawn,
To sit in its grey chamber, and to see
The first faint glow that trembles through the dusk ;
Warmer the hint of day ; the welcoming east
In silence draws the green out of the dark :
Beyond the riven pearl the morning sky
Flames, and the dew-fires kindle in the grass ;
Sudden, the day: arise with outstretched arms —
The Sun invades again his ancient home.

*How many dawns the earth hath known
Of joyous days and days of moan !
Yet as the Sun his daily cup
Drinks of the nightly falling dew,
Think you he wearies ? He lifts up
Gladly the draught. Each dawn is new.*

The flood of noon that flows around the world,
Upon whose crest we struggle and exult,
To you is but a tide of light and melody
And rest. The harvest never seems to toil
In waxing rich,— the rose in growing sweet.
And mid-day only murmurs the content
Of insects seeking new and tiny fare,
And indolently singing in the quest ;
The trees are still ; among the hills the clouds
Gather in dark rebellion 'gainst the blue.

*The light that drives our dreams away,
And the fond vestments that our idols wear,
The light relentless on the feet of clay
We fear,— but need we find the truth less fair ?
The hours we learn, the hours we toil
Are not so sweet as hours we dream and sing ;
The lute, the dance, Romance's coil
Fade in the noon-light. Hath the truth a sting ?*

When Phœbus 'lights upon the western hill
And leads his pageant to the fount of sleep,
You see the banners of his triumph glow,
And hear the sunset pæan of his praise.
But dearer is the maiden gaze of Artemis,
The calmer splendour of her silver shield;
Dearer her hand that on the brow of earth
Rests cool and hopeful. When she comes to hear
We grow more trusting, speak of nearer things,
Open our hearts to her that constant is
In her inconstancy. Yea, she doth lure
Our secrets from us as the sea in tides,
And still we throng her dim confessional.

*Heart that speaks to aching heart —
Humble hearts before the shrine —
Hidden grief and smiling care,
All the faith our souls can share,
All of truth that words can dare,—
Artemis, these things are thine.*

Song of the Sun

Loose me the scourge of the morning in glittering
lashes,
Swing free the hissing whips that silence the song of
the dawn,
Scatter the mists that beset thee with withering
flashes,—
Rise thou a king, triumphant o'er fabled eternities
gone.

Sullen and gray are the fog-hosts, impenetrant,
bounding
Thy castle unseen,—unsuspected its glory of im-
potent gold —
Tufted and plumed they gather, vindictive sur-
rounding,
Rise and destroy, O Sluggard ! smite as thou
smotest of old.

Gone is the indolent twilight, the shroud interven-
ing
Soft as the breath of a flower, 'twixt the eye and the
empyrean tomb ;
Gone is the menacing storm-forest, fitfully leaning,
Wavering, rearing on high its vehement head in
the gloom ;

Gone is the night and forgotten ; and melodies
golden
Glide from a celebrant harp, ghostly, intangible,
sweet,—
Singing the pæan of morn, to the morn-wind be-
holden
For breath to arouse the æolian heart from its slum-
berous beat.

The soul of the world's in the dawn, for thy victory
yearning
Over the hosts thou must drive to obey thy des-
potic desire,—
Waiting the hour of thy triumph, when gorgeously
burning,
Thou shalt rise to thy panoplied, chivalrous might
in a fabric of fire.

Rise as a ruler tyrannic, imperious yellow
Zoning thy royal heart with its hate and the heat of
it all;
Blinding thy glances,— now bitter, now genial and
mellow,—
Regal thy shadows, for purple is regal, and purple
they fall.

Bright was the birth of the world, when with trem-
bling fingers
Phœbus essayed to guide his course through a vir-
ginal sky,—
Bright thou wert then in thy splendour, thy glory
still lingers,
Holding its sway with the pride of a ruler who
never can die.

*Loose me the scourge of the morning in glittering
lashes,
Swing free the hissing whips that silence the song of
the dawn,
Scatter the mists that beset thee, with withering
flashes,—
Rise thou a king, triumphant o'er fabled eternities
gone.*

The Sphinx

Above her head the sky is hung blue-arching, pil-
lared-white
With banked clouds that reach across to dunes of
ghastly grey —
The sky that drowned the ships of stars in all the
seas of Night
And loosed Osiris' bloodhounds on the fugitives of
Day.

Hers is a rock-hewn citadel whereon hath flickered
faint
The clang of dread and dusty wars, of far and fool-
ish hosts ;
Her breast has stored unnumbered vows that hailed
her as a saint ;
Against her soul unheeded beat Time's pestilential
ghosts.

The heat the sand hath hugged so long is rising in
blue thrills,
Her bulk impassive quivers not, her pulse doth
never change ; —
Below the sky-line, out of sight, are hid the haunt-
ing hills
That rim the ends of earth along the utter ocean-
range.

The womb of all the world is parched beneath the
tropic breeze,
The earth's a flameless furnace that taints the outer
air,—
Beneath that sand no man can say what cities lie at
peace,
Within that breast no man can guess what brand
of soul is there ;

Hidden behind that stolid brow were spun the vast
 intrigues
That swayed the arms of Empire to conquest —
 and to death ;
The silent voice that calls and calls across the bar-
 ren leagues
Doth hover in that throat that lacks the benison of
 breath ;
Trusting the lips that never ope, the tongue that
 murmurs not,
Within that heart the phantoms lie of countless
 empty biers,
Around those feet the wrecks of wills are foun-
 dered and forgot,
Across that face the winds have hurled the dust of
 powdered years.
Her ears are filled as like a shell wherein the ocean
 roars
Of fleet and fairest argosy and pageants on far seas,
The lure is sweet of Ages Past, as sirens on the
 shores
That draw their dupes to breathe their last before
 the gleaming knees ;
And Memory, that dwells within that outer chill, is
 hot :
Perchance she sees the kings of Eld, of heritage un-
 guessed,
Perchance her spirit-eye within is brooding o'er the
 grot
Wherein the Passion-Queen received her warriors
 on her breast ;

The rock above is silent green, the floor beneath is
laid
With carpetings in deathless dye, and rugs the
Mullahs wove,
The borders of them marvelous of myths that
haply strayed
Within the woof and speechless spoke the threaded
loom of love ;
The constant sands are lying grey outside the
throbbing cave,
The steeds that bear her lovers race invisible in
dust,
While dark behind and out of sight is sunk the
final grave,
For Life must live and Love must die, lest Hassan's
blade should rust.
She sees across the desert reaches, endless caravans
Of midnight sheiks and conquerors that swept from
sea to sea
And bore the maids to charm the eyes of Eblis
with a dance
And work the mystic glamour of the East's slim
sorcery.
The captains of the northerland have had their
triumphs here,
The boom of distant shouting wakes an echo for
her now,
The asphodels have long since bloomed upon the
captive's bier,—
Who bore the crown of Egypt as a laurel on her
brow.

Perhaps (since queen should dwell with queen) she
sees that One who crossed
The grey grim plain of Memphis as a fire fangs the
sky,
Who fain had killed all lovers for one lover whom
she lost,—
Who loved — a night, and on the morn swift whis-
pered "Let him die."

She who was born to savage pomps and destinies
and thrones,
Whose eyes held thrice the yearning of the Lotus
of the South,
Whose murdered lovers died in bliss, if fair between
their groans,
They caught one smile of crimson pity on her cruel
mouth;

She who upon the Cydnus' tide, proud-panoplied in
gold,
Floated adown, as down the years have floated
flecks of her,
Who queens all queens when all is said, and every
song is told,—
Yet perished aspic-smitten, conquering her con-
queror;

Aye, dead and cold that breast, and cold and dead
the pierced arm,
The thrilling love-light shines no more, no more
exults that smile
To snare our fallen princes: dead is that rich pas-
sion-charm
That wooed the Sun in breathless haste across the
southern dial. . . .

Haply, this Other being gone, the Queen of
Stone 's content
That she too slumbers there untouched except of
Isis' gleam,
With voiceless wooing of dim ghosts in all the
breezes blent
To live again the splendour of that Egypt in a
dream.

Arizona

The kings of the world have waxed and died
In narrower states than mine ;
And realms have risen to rampant power
To sink in drear decline,
That were poor by the measure of my wealth —
The creditors of the brine.

*For I am cursed with the curse of dearth
To dry the heart of youth ;
And my needs are the same as the needs of hell :
Water and women and truth.*

Across my purple peaks the snows
Fall scant and dry away,
And the breasts of earth that should be full
Are withered and rimed and grey ;
For the chill is mine of the dewless night
Till the barren, aching day.

I call to my heedless, jewelled sky —
The shimmering wanton smiles,
Flinging her bacchant robes of cloud
Across the thirsty miles,
And the intimate stars come near in the night
To bare her mocking wiles.

I call on his hastening trails the wind,
Where the mad dust-demons glide,
But he answers me with the sting of a lash
And only a pause to chide ;
And his forefront sweeps as a gloomy flame
Where the silence stretches wide.

For I was old when the Younger Sea
Arose to seek my bed,
And in my tale 'tis but a night
That he and I were wed,

For in the morn I woke again
And the love of him was dead.

I rose and thrust him from my side
Although he loved me well,
And he was wroth to leave a house
For the wailing winds to dwell ;
He cursed me with his father's curse,
We struggled, and he fell.

And on that morn across my brow
He seared an open scar,
As the fingers of the Younger Sea
Have branded with a star
The brides that have one time been his,
Where his roving foot-prints are.

But in my heart I hide the wealth
He gave the night before,
And little men find to lure them on —
A little that dreams of more,
But they may not face the wrath that guards
The Sea's dear gifts of yore.

For I dare not show the first love's gifts
To him that now is lord,
As I am faithful to the Sun
In all things save the hoard
Of hidden gems of the banished Sea
That in my breast is stored.

Now since the Sun hath held me queen
And kissed my lips with fire,
I have risen young each morn again
And robed in queen's attire,
Stifling the dream of other days
In the heat of his desire.

*So am I cursed with the curse of dearth
To dry the heart of youth;
And my needs are the same as the needs of hell:
Water and women and truth.*

The Unsought Shrine

Friend, I have sat here many sleepy days,
Here, in the corner of the market place,
Here, where the jangling cries of trade
Announce the opening treasures of the South ;
Here, underneath the guardian tower,
Where all the hurrying merchants strive
And barter for the good of sordid goods.
And while I sit, the worldly folk who pass
Speak of me now and then and shake their heads
As though to say : "That old and maudlin fool,
"What waits he here? Ah, well, leave him alone,
"He does no harm, and many kinds of folk
"Find place in this so strangely ordered world."
And I — what do I wait? Ah, friend of mine,
I only sit where habit placeth me.
And my wares? I keep them from the foolish gaze.

Oft I bethink the time I first came here,
For I had wrought a thing through all my days ;
(I was a man one time, such as these men ;
A common man of ordinary lot,
Toiling and spending, modest in my joys,
And prosperous.) And then — then came a dream.
It was a dream such as none ever dreampt,
A vision of the fullness of the fruit
Of a soul's labor — wrought in stubborn steel
And cunningly contrived, with figured frets
Of virgin gold ; and all at last to be
A Shrine unto the god that wrought the dream ; —
I left the futile toil of day and day
To build the Shrine.

For that I knew no craft,
And had but little skill in handiwork,
My toil was slow ; through all my manhood's years

I worked, with doubly certain care and pains,
And spent my substance for my daily want.
For by the dream I knew that when 'twas done
I would expose it in the market square,
And then would come a virtuous devotee
Of that bright selfsame god, and he would buy
And place the Shrine aloft, to worship at :
So that should be the issue of my toil.

Then, when at last the thing was made
And I could alter not a single touch
For better end, I brought it and sat here.
Well I remember how I took a place
And sat me with the Shrine before my feet,
Thus bound and swathed with this same covering.
I sat a while and mused, amid the throng
That poured in ceaseless stream along the way,
For in my fervor of accomplishment
It seemed so sweet to wait and feel my power,
To know that all the bustling folk who passed
Knew not the secret that this covering hid,
Nor could they feel the presence of the Shrine,
Nor know that I had brought a masterpiece
To lay before them. When I raised the cloth
At length — my heart leapt fierce and strong,
And then — I let the shimmering sunlight in
To play about the glitter of my Shrine.

And lo ! Not one that passed who paused to look
Nor view the product of the labor I had done,
But all went on about their several ways,
Nor cared to see the ending of my handiwork ;
Save when some curious children in their play
Paused for a moment thus to gaze, and smile,
And query why the shining thing was made.
They did not feel the presence of the god.
But when I saw that none would seek the Shrine,
I fell into a rage, and cursed the god,

And would have crushed the thing, but that I saw,
Just as I raised my hand to strike, a fault,
And spared my Shrine that I might make it right.

When that was done there stopped a passer-by
Who stood and smiled a gentle sort of smile,
And looked upon the Shrine with loving eyes,
As one who understood the dream might look.
And then at last he spoke; "This, old man,
"This glittering thing, who wrought it out?"
"I made it," then said I, my heart full warm,
For in his eyes was written kindly praise.
But when he spoke — I lost my dream of gods.
"Well hast thou wrought, with true untiring care,
"But to what purpose? None will buy this thing."
"What? None?" I cried. "Nay, none will buy."
And in my soul I felt his word's calm truth,
So that my rebel heart cried in despair,
"Then who shall pay me for the making it?
"Who shall buy back my years of solitary toil?"
"Hast thou made of this thing a perfect thing
"So that no further work could better it?"
"Yea," I said and waited till he spoke again.
"Then is thy wage full paid," he said at last,
"Thy sweet reward is such that none may steal,
"Nor question of the fullness of the tale."

And so I sit here every day and watch
The shifting pageants of the city's trade;
And keep the cloth about the Shrine. Ah no,
I dare not lift it off, for fear to find
Another fault, or to be seized with rage
That if I saw again, I might destroy.

Her Accolade

Read ye the answer in his face?
Ye dare to try, yet may not read,
Some soul-remembered dawn hath grace
To steel his spirit for this need;
The armour, felt but never seen,
Bespeaks a lover of the Queen.

The Queen hath come, the Queen hath fled
As arctic ice in tropic seas,
The love that lay about her head
In bright unpondered mysteries
Is now despoiled of head to rim,—
Yet still Her mercy guardeth him.

Ay, still it guardeth him who laid
His homage for her heart to hold,
The faith he clasps all unafraid
Hath shot the desolate dusk with gold;
The image that his fancy limned
Hath eyes star-luminous and dimmed.

The odour of her in the air,
The music of her on the breeze,
The echo of her, like a prayer,
Drawing her lover to his knees,
Like some dim Druid that of old
Made mute confessor of the wold;

The choking that hath gripped his throat,
Who framed soft speech for her alone,
The evanescent gleams that float
Down from her far resplendent throne,—
Be these the remnants of her reign,
The tokens that she lives again.

Dies she because she is not nigh
To praise his worth or soothe his ill?
Nay, underneath the self-same sky
Her heart is beating pure and still;
The Sun rejoices on his way
For he hath touched her lips today.

A

Maiden

A bud is blown ; to-day a bud is blown.
In all the world was e'er a bud so fair
As this, whose fresh virginity is thrown
Ope to the stings of all the bees who dare?
Was there a bud who fluttered ever less
To loose her trembling petals to the Sun,
Blushing unconscious of her loveliness,
Daring not even to her heart confess
Her maiden terrors for the change begun ;
Looked in earth's garden one so fair to us
Who saw her, newly-risen, tremulous,
Enter the throbbing radiance that swept
A ray of peace to mother-heart that wept
Because the bud had blown into a rose.

Throughout the greater Mother runs the tale ;
Nature hath never dared allow to wait
Her little loves of poignant mystery —
Hath never dared to risk her blooms to fail
By overlong postponement of their state,
For all their terrors of reluctance ;
And as we closer to our Mother stray
More firm and more inexorable she seems,
Exacts her lawful penance to a day,
Permits no tricky subterfuge to break
As intervention 'twixt her hand and dreams.
Mortals dare wait for blooming as they may,
The woman in the child remain awake,—
But Nature wills no trifling, so at last
The first sweet fearful boundaries are past.

Sad? Is the mother only sad, who knows
The pangs and sorrow, loneliness and pain
That must assail the newly-wakened rose,
Fresh with her dewy life-blood of the rain ;
She hath not learnt the myriad piercing stings

Of hate and envy, and the foe that creeps
In guise of friendship, under loving wings
And breeds his malice as his smile he keeps,
Sweeter for being sinful, on his lips.
The bud that has been and can never be
Is now a rose, and she must bend and sway
And curtsy to all comers gracefully,
Blushing beneath the blandishments of Day.
Her heart that hath been hid so far within
Is bared to myriad malices and scorns,
And no protection may she hope to win
From her too frail and futile guardian thorns,
For they are tender too, yet tenderer
Her heart; — ah, should she ever learn to hide
That tenderness which is the soul of her
What mercy then for us can ever stir —
What magic then can make us deified?

Today her soul is open to the winds,
They press their kisses on her virgin mouth
Yet all the new enchantment that she finds
Within the soft embraces of the South
She may not welcome to her soul because
The wind hath many roses kissed before,
Left wrecks of wooings on far-sundered haws,—
Because she knows the future has in store
So many fickle lovers that she dare
Not trust the one to whom her heart is fain,
Yet since that heart is naked to the air
Hides she not all her virgin love in vain?
She thrills to hear the wooing of that breeze,
To hear the murmur as the waters roll
At night beneath the predatory trees
That sway aloft in rustling mysteries,
Crooning an endless echo o'er and o'er,
Seeking an answer to their restless soul;
She knows the world is there, and half afraid

Would shrink again, a bud become once more
And still with flush of girlhood on her brow,
Re-live the careless heaven of a maid ;
The dainty perfume of some guarding leaf
Is like a sweet regret around her now
That joy hath been too short and youth too brief.

Yet would the fair rose-mother, gazing down
Upon her child half eager to return
Into her shielding chrysalidic gown,—
Would she, the mother, then forbear to yearn
For the dear vanished girlhood of her child
At seeing her the queen of all the flowers
That Wealth can breed or Nature nurture wild
To soothe the dread of dying from the hours?
And would it recompense the new-born Queen
To scan the water-mirror that is loathe
To lose her crimson from its clasp of green,—
That clings all jealous to her image, yet
Reflects enough to glorify them both?
Would it not comfort her and make forget
Her fair unwilling terrors to be born,
To see the crown that on her head is set,—
A crown of Beauty for the realm of Morn?

The Madness of Tristram

Maiden, beware ! old wounds are mine that bleed,
Old scars that burn, and the recrescent pangs
Of all my clashing battles since, untried,
I fought for Cornwall's truage, and King Mark ;
These mortal scars the fervent queen hath kissed —
Isoud the Queen hath kissed, and healed them not.
Nay, let me run half-clad, servant of clowns
And fellow to the herds ; they do not know :
They see no phantom shield upon my arm,
Hear in my voice no challenge of lost kings ;
For them there is no vision of the face —
The face I sought across the fairer world —
The light that shone for me above the cross,
And sheathed my lance with flame invincible ;
They have not seen French vineyards, purple-
stol'd,

Russet and blue of autumn and the hills,
Revel of Southern Springtime, — nor the house
Where sleeps my virgin with the milk-white hands :
Nor the green, singing island whence I brought
King Mark his queen — and ruin for my soul.

When by the mouldering gate of Mæreek Hold
She stood among the maids, as fair as death,
Sweeter than midnight in a joust of Days,—
I came and thrilled but knew her not, and fought
For mine own worship, and to light her eyes.
Then from the royal sire I took her hence,
For she was white, and Mark desired a queen —
A guerdon only for the king I loved,
A burning candle for a friendly saint.

Maiden, behold the swinging night of deeps,
And the Storm lashing on the Sea's sad face.
We clung together to our wounded ship
While the false billows taunted us with love,

Rocking and roaring when her hands sought mine,
Though but in fear of night they sought, and I
Gave only comfort. Then the phial she found,
And sudden as a thrust, the night blazed out —
Dim lamps of love burned on each foam-shot crest,
The red gold of the sun awoke in us,
The ocean staggered and our love trod wild,
Wet flames were in our eyes, and ancient fates
Took us and bound us, burning, to our stars.

Years, and our open shame, and speeding youth,
Lights in far castles, quests and chastening seas,
Strange conquerings in dragon-haunted lands,
Dark roads, wide marches, and fair traitor days;
Glory one other only hath, and like to him
Grappled with Honour doth my potion cling.
Maid, I have come to be caressed in dreams —
To feel dear kisses and to hear sweet words
When the chill wind doth beat my face with stings;
Betimes in every tree of this deep wood
I see her beckon, lithe and tall, the queen,
About me maddening — everywhere Isoud,
Till the dread wind brings up our shame,
And wraps me in it, till it covers me,
And mounts above the wood, and stains the skies.

Beware, thou woman with a calmer heart,
For I am mad upon old love denied;
Get hence, lest from the ringing hell
Of my dark soul a demon glide, and stamp
Upon thy face the face of her I love,
And cheat me with a fancy of her eyes.

Lionardo and Lisa

*I pray thee, Madonna, be patient,
I pray thee, Madonna, be kind,
While I mirror the fanciful fabric
Of thy quaintly mystical mind.*

A tapestry wondrously woven, a marvel of gossamer sheen,—
Inconsistent as woman, yet through its intangible line
Form of the central compulsion and swirl of the definite scene —
Order in orderless chaos and rule in unruly design ;
Harmonies blent of the summers, memories pearl and of rose,
Sweet with old joys and dead laughter, dim in the nights of the past,
Hours of the sun and the starlight, and the west wind yare as it blows,
Drifting of musical ripples or shadows old tragedies cast ;
Memories dear in fulfillment, memories bitter of tears,
Dreams that have faded and bubbles with rainbow trceries wrought,
Broken and lost in the clasping, wrongs of the tyrannous years,
Riches of human remembrance, and passion of battles unfought.
Powers : yea, the power of loosing the grip of the demon of wrath,
Fingers to smoothe from the brow the lines of implacable pain,

Power of uplifting, inspiring, the power that Apollo
hath,
Blind in its merciful wonder — the power of the
spring and the rain.

Pictures from out of the ages ; Romances or ever
the Sun
Lifting across the Ægean, blinked at the jealous
walls
Guarding the Trojan mothers, ere a Trojan prince
had won
The shame, and the name, and the beauty that
weeps when the Trojan falls ;
Fables the Grecian fountains poured forth for the
Grecian youth,
Signs and symbols and statues, oracles, wreaths,
and gods,
Glories of Attic fancy, virtue of Attic truth,
Myths of the world's brief hour when Beauty
ruled with rods ;

Stories the Latian shepherds had learned from the
winds that blew
Far from the Persian gardens and the Macedonian hills,
Loves that the dark Egyptians and the hot-heart
Romans knew,
Passions of East and of West, and of antique war
that thrills ;

Sagas of chill Valhalla, fair vikings that went
forth
Strong with the tang of the ice-fields, in open ships
and free,
Sweeping the coast of the world from the barren
house of the North,—
Children in soulful arts, but brothers of the sea ;

Missals of churchly gloom and chantings of stolen
joy,
Wonderful saints that groped with faith in foolish
words,
Knights of red blood, and ladies, and tales the
years destroy,
Quests and the Grail, strange vows and demands,
and tourneys and swords.

These things are patterned and blazoned, wrought
in the fabric clear,
These and a thousand fancies, and merriment, and
smiles,
Lights of humour, and dashes of scarlet, and gold
of the mere,
Sympathy out of the heart, and little woman's
wiles :

These in the pattern are blended ; yet over them,
over them all
High where the midnight breathes in the mystery
of gloom,
Deep in the sky I dare not, heedless if I should
fall,
Bright as the beacon of hope, or the past in the
face of doom,

Flames that pierce the arras, shining reluctant
through,
Betraying the fabric of colours with a hint of an ultimate goal,
Blaze the two stars soft-glowing, unfearing and
final and true,
The stars behind the curtain, that prove the silver
soul.

The Exile

If in the long unfolding years the wreath
Of bays my head should crown,
If fame should come, or worthy work of mine
Stand in my people's sight, and twine
My name with glory in the common breath,
Would you regret my ruined humble shrine —
If you had torn a Poet's birthplace down?

What matters it? If all my toil to naught
Time razes in his rout,
And as the unknown to unending rest
I follow in my turn, my highest crest
Still shadowed in the valley where I fought —
That house to me were not less richly blest,
Although no pilgrim feet shall seek it out.

The land is yours : for me the house still stands
In memories wrought ;
The gold and grey of days that children know,
The wonder of the dawn's re-entrant glow,
The touch of happiness ; my mother's hands,
And on her temples the benignant snow —
For me live there. 'Twas but the land you bought.

The Dragon Fly

Mine is the song of the soul, of the spirit immortal
of life;

Waking in dread and joy from the slumberous rest
of the night,

Crowned with the seal of the ghost, I glory and
yearn to the strife —

To follow and master the ways of the tune and the
tear and the light.

In streams of shimmering slime my lazy life began,
In the paths of the mystic places, in the sound of
the secret things;

Mine was the revel of youth, in the world that the
ripples span,

Till the summer-gods taught the song, the Song of
the Glittering Wings.

Then to my spirit was granted the mutable king-
dom of air,

The blaze of the sun upon water, the pearl of a
misty moon,—

These are the treasures they gave me, to hold and
to conquer and share,

Till the tale of my days was written in a reckless,
wilderer's rune.

And now my treasure is empty, my prodigal song
is done,

The road the sunshine showed me is lost in a silent
wood;

The gods can aid no further, the goal of the flight
is won;—

The glittering wings shall fold, and the peace at the
last shall be good.

The Muse of Four-Years-Old

When I was young, so long ago,
Back where the clouds have hid the sun,
How much there was I did not know
When all my world was scarce begun,
My wit was dull, my step was slow,
With toys and games my matins rung,
I sought for Pleasure, high and low,
For I was young.

But since that I have seen to rise
Ten thousand suns and seen them fall
Red, gold, and yellow, orange-wise,
I know that Pleasure is not all;
You sing of Joy in lullabyes —
In vain henceforward those are sung,
I've not been fooled by women's lies
Since I was young.

Your "Go and play" I do not hear;
You women do not comprehend
The stern and solemn atmosphere
These virgin bifurcations lend;
With inward scorn and brow austere,
From ashes of my youth among
Now, phoenix-like, I reappear,
Who once was young.

For me is now the coil of Fate,
The ring of War, and of Romance:
Your childish joys are come too late
To him who now is wearing pants;
Time was, I thought I'd celebrate
When off my female garb I'd flung,
But — Mirth's not meet for Man's estate,
I am not young.

The Spirit of the Dunes

Where bleak defiance swelling soft
Shifts with the gale or drinks the sun,
Thy wayward, homeless home is made,
Thy watch is keen on fields long won ;
*The ghost of Dearth that Time hath sired
Still brooding guards the undesired.*

Thy fingers twining in the wind
As lovers' hands with tresses play,
Remould thine empire in the night,
And bring new states to greet the day :
*New hills — yea, mortal hills shall rise
To boast before the changing skies.*

For though thy voice doth wail in woe,
The cedars dare thy heart to find,
And, nestling to thy barren breast,
The humbler shrubs still call thee kind.
*Though bare the house and bleak the path
And false the bills — all is not wrath.*

Chant to Dionysos

Lord of the indolent autumn,
Lord of the purple and gold,
We hail thee !
Immortal crowned with youth of old —
Thou child of thunder and tears,
From the loom of the passionate years,
Enwoven of summers art thou, and ours
From the sea.
Lier in sunlight and lover of showers,
Master of nights when the moon is hid,
For thee our leaping pulses bid
An ecstasy ;
For thee the dappled mænads writhe
In antic frenzied mirth, and lithe
As serpents to the thyrsus clinging
While the frantic measure winging
Of mystery ;
For thee the trees that bless are sown
To yield when springtime woos, and yet —
Brides of the summer that is gone —
Bear fruits of love when winter's threat
Tears from them saffron robes of shame ;
Iacchus, for thee
Apollo's flame doth smoulder in the dusk
Of grapes that clasp in turgent hearts
His thrilling light and love and musk
And melody
When the rich passion of the sun departs.

A Pirate Song

The sea swings mad in the raging grip
Of the seething stinging gale,
It moans its hate with a yearning wrath
That bids fair cheeks go pale,—
But fill the bowl to its brimming top,
Drink ! for to-night we sail.

Ay, fill the bowl and drain the bowl,
Sing heigh for the brimming ale,
And fill and drain — again — again —
Till the smoking wassails fail,
Then hurl the bowl at the trembling host,
Drink ! for to-night we sail.

The sleet beats down like a rain of blows
On a coat of iron mail,
And faint and thin through the ringing din
Is heard the lookout's hail,
But it's up and up with the foaming cup,
Drink ! for to-night we sail.

And it's hurl the cup at the landlord's head,
And little his threats avail
For the unpaid score, — with joyous roar
It's jeer at the beckoning gaol,
And it's sing farewell through the night of hell,—
Drink ! for to-night we sail.

Lyrics

I

Sweet Lady, on whose teeming shrine
The roses of my life are laid,
Shall I be sad if fate entwine
In wreaths by alien fingers made
With them the daisies of new Springs,
And passion-flowers that bloom and fade?

For me the rose blooms slow and pale,
Of breath how deep, of mouth how small :
In richer gardens every gale
Doth bid a thousand petals fall ;
Still in my spirit rapture rings
That wreath holds rose of mine at all.

II

As the swallows on the wing
Flirt and wheel adown the breeze
That, to stir the heart of Spring,
Restless through the eager trees
Summons straying memories
Of the year it bids to die,—
Through the laughter of the Spring
Rings old Winter's faint Goodbye.

So adown the reaches lorn
Of the ages insincere
On the buoyant æther borne,
Calling potent, far and clear,
Through the changes of the year,
Ever new — and yet the same —
Of the sunlight golden born
Rings the echo of her name.

III

I dare not touch thy hand, O Queen,
(Fingers have erring hearts betrayed)
Lest, cold, my touch might dalliance be,
Or trembling hot, make thee afraid.

I'm bound in chains of silence chill,
Fettered and bound with foolish fears,
I may not hope to lean on hope
Nor look for mercy in the years.

My crime it is to dream of thee,
(If dreams of mine disturb thy soul)
The only right I had in thee
Was one sweet glimpse — and that I stole.

IV

Purl of the sibilant waters,
Call of a wooing bird,
Clear of a bell or a sea-song,—
Such is the voice I heard.

Odour of intimate roses,
Echo of hurrying wind,
Loom of the star-gleaming heaven,—
Such is the woof of her mind.

Sheen of the sun o' the summer,
Pale of the moon i' the mist,
Whisper of murmuring midnight,—
Such are the eyes I kissed.

V

I can not find in faith or love
Thy Lyric of the Deep,
Nor in the ways of trackless light
Where wheeling star-beams sweep,
Nor in the song of earth and sea
That toil and toiling sleep.

The silent pageants of a dream
Blare far too strong ;
To silences of midnight skies
I 've listened long —
But far more still must be the world
To hear that song.

VI

In the praise of the Queen
May the lyre be strung,
When the garlands are green
Her tresses among,
May her crown wreath her head
When the choral is sung
And the sunset is red.

To the Queen is the pride
And the praise and the song,
When the silence is wide
And the heavens are long :
May the lyrical rune
'Scape the hurrying throng
And rejoice with the moon.

VII

Each dance we tread —
As a pearl it slips
From a broken thread ;
And my lady trips
Through the spinning maze
As the thistle-down
Through the mellow days
When the hills are brown ;
For each dance we tread
The night grows old,
For each rose that is dead
Let another unfold.
And for us the night
With the spangled skies,—
And the dancing light
In my lady's eyes.

VIII

Heart of red in swelling breast,
Hair of gold o'er gleaming brow,
Hands the gods had fain caressed —
Beauty unforgotten now,—
Lives forever as a test
Of the strength of mortals' vow.

In the fire of that flare
Lost we our sincerity,
Beauty smiled to see us dare,
Laughed at our apostacy,—
Still we spurned the vital air,
Glad for such a dream to die.

Heart o' red and hair o' gold,
Hand that glimmers fair and white,—
Through the summer and the cold,
Through the reverential night,—
Deck the diadem of old
With the gems of dead delight.

IX

Faint are the lights that guide me,
Afar doth the beacon shine,
Strange crags and rills deride me,
Weird roads are mixed in mine,
But like a wraith beside me
You warp my way to thine ;
Like the vine that clings in clasping
The rugged rock-ribbed hill,
I have felt the silk of your heart-strings
Round the iron of my will.

The love of the breast that bare me
Hath kept your worship pure,
Though hapless the hopes that dare me,
Though terrible lips allure,
Though alien gods ensnare me,—
The lift of your song is sure ;
Like the floss of the silver cob-web
On the bars of a prison-still,
I have felt the silk of your heart-strings
Round the iron of my will.

X

Princess of morning, in whose eyes
 The glitter of the dew doth shine,
 As when the enkindling suns that rise
 To burn away the spider-line
 Fill all the dawn with flamelets fine :
 Princess, our *devoir* to thy state,—
 Maid of the opening Orient Gate.

Into the grey-lit garden close,
 When all the stars are dying pale,
 The distant odour of his Rose —
 Like far horizon-hidden sail
 That trembles through the misty gale —
 Creeps fervent-sweet, and wakes thy breath
 Under the fickle kiss of Death.

The rose hath ope'd ; along the sky
 Its flame hath leapt, and banners are
 The dark hung arras that on high
 Sheltered the last defiant star
 Before thy love went forth to war :
 Ah, maid, he comes ; what fragrant fire
 Canst thou oppose to his desire ?

Princess, the kiss that on thy mouth
 The lips of Death have lightly laid
 When in the twilight of the South
 Thou wert not ashamed, nor he afraid,—
 Forget that kiss (who hath not strayed ?)
 Thy glowing hair, thine eyes of light
 Are spoils for him who conquers Night.

A Ballade of Friendship

When smiles deny thy inner woe
Or grief is hid in calm disdain,
Have I the right to learn to know
The secret of the inner fane?
If laughing lips the heart distract,
Am I so far from human kin,
Unworthy of the trust of pain? —
Open thy heart and let me in.

Or when the joy of June doth flow,
And tangled pleasures swift enchain,
When summer winds unbidden blow
The gladness of the summer rain;
When through each full and fervent vein
The pulse of life is strong to win,
When in thy kingdom mirth doth reign,—
Open thy heart and let me in.

Give me to share the chill and glow,
Give me to feel both spur and rein,
Teach me to conquer and forego,
Teach me to clasp and to refrain;
Nor, trusting, be thy trust in vain —
The key to that dear store within
I hold with fingers unprofane —
Open thy heart and let me in.

L'ENVOI

Friend, though we twain may never know
When joy must end and pain begin,
By interlacing ways we go —
Open thy heart and let me in.

TO H. F. B.

1910.

A Ballade of Dead Kingdoms

Troy stood, a sceptre in her mighty hand,
Beside the dark Ægean's darker blue,
And in her streets the Grecians' dread demand
The very turrets recognized and knew, —
The streets wherein triumphant Trojans slew
Are quiet now in never-broken shade,
Their light is dying to a sullen hue, —
The pictures of the ages flare and fade.

The pomps of empires builded on the sand
Of fickle fate, have died as was their due,
The eagles' shrilling o'er the Gallic land
Is silent now that once the Romans knew;
The lust of proud dominion proved untrue
And by her greatness was the Great betrayed,
And Rome became a fading image, too, —
The pictures of the ages flare and fade.

So satrapies and kingdoms rise and stand
And fall as there have fallen all their crew
Of fellow-monarchies on every hand;
How will it be the ages through and through?
How in the future will the Furies do
If thus Democracy be not obeyed?
All kings must fall before the stern review, —
The pictures of the ages flare and fade.

L'ENVOI

Take then thy monarchies and pomps, thou Shrew
That men call Fame — and curse the jilting jade;
Let me bide here, while in the night with you
The pictures of the ages flare and fade.

TO W. R.

A Ballade of Childhood

As children love each other, hate, and turn
Their fickle faces near — and then away —
As they unite and separate, and yearn
For coming of the new unhappy day
Whereon the child must leave the glad array
Of youth for that dread rolling of the spheres,—
So do they find in life's unceasing fray
Their love and grief, their merriment and tears.

With all the pain of youth old age may burn,
Old faiths may waver and old sins may slay,
The wraiths of former happiness return
To mock at us and laugh at our dismay,—
The pleasures of the Present may not weigh
Against the Past's triumphant storm of jeers,
And to their graves those hours shall bear away
Their love and grief, their merriment and tears.

We are but children, so we do not learn
When we should curse and when we ought to pray,
When to embrace and better, when to spurn
A hope that might our blinded souls betray ;
'T were wiser if as children we should stay
With all the royalty of childhood's peers,
And live and love with them, and know as they
Their love and grief, their merriment and tears.

L'ENVOI

Ah, lord of childhood's merry disarray
And all the trappings that thy youth endears,
Teach me the secret of the children's play,
Their love and grief, their merriment and tears.

TO G. M. M. C. C.

A Ballade of Old Fancies

The mists of night that hang above the Sea,
The thrill of yearning in the dying hymn,
The storied secrets of antiquity
That lurk within that sepulchre so dim,
The gloom that shrouds the fallen seraphim,
The lilt of triumph that the victor sung,—
The legends of the years are plain to him
Who stores old fancies in a heart that's young.

The racing seasons leave a legacy
Of lights that flicker and of eyes that dim,—
The Past hath lost itself, in courtesy,
And left the Future's fingers free to limn
His Fancy's likeness on the carven rim
Wherefrom the draught of Lethe bathes the
tongue,—

One image lives impregnable for him
Who stores old fancies in a heart that's young.

A treasure Time has guarded jealously,
An Image, beautiful, elusive, slim,
A marvel of unearthly witchery,—
Fair as a færy and as light of limb
As they who danced by phantom river's brim,—
By such remembrance in his spirit wrung
A wraith from Long Ago is loved of him
Who stores old fancies in a heart that's young.

L'ENVOI

Dear Lady, I your shrine with garlands trim,
Where should the spoils of emperors be hung,—
Be thou my Image; let me stand for him
Who stores old fancies in a heart that's young.

TO C. G. B.

The Ballade of the Buccaneer

Long live the King. The King is dead —
He who had sworn to rule for aye
Where I swear now to reign instead
O'er hearts that hate and hands that slay
Hearts that hate as hot as they ;
Hark to my blooded sea-dogs sing :
(For fallen lord, small care have they)
"The King is dead ; long live the King."

Beneath his keel the waves were red
From tropic tide to Baltic bay,
Voices of vengeance on his head,
In dying gasps from lips of grey,
Livened the langour of his way ;
If those dead souls do know this thing
Chuckle they not to hear men say :
"The King is dead : long live the King?"

The fame he wooed, my name shall wed,
A world shall bow beneath my sway,
For every crimson drop he shed
Ten drops shall I, from out this day
When first, in battle-scarred array,
I heard my blooded sea-dogs sing,
Standing above him where he lay :
"The King is dead ; long live the King."

L'ENVOI

Dead foe, yours is the wisest way,
For Time to me this hour must bring
When, dying, I shall hear them say :
"The King is dead ; long live the King."

TO F. B. R.

Ballade of The Garret

Abode of ghosts and penury,
This house of dark and winding stairs ;
A room as bare as misery —
A home for him who dreams and dares —
Where through the chinks the frosty airs
Sweep eagerly the unswept floor,
And Dearth commands a troop of cares
To guard the else unguarded door.

A dreamer's home, its mystery
His pain hath known, and his despairs,
A shrine of pride whose votary
Defiant kneels before his *Lares* ;
For faithless hope and hopeless prayers
To gods that other men forswore ;
A warning sign for him who fares —
To guard the else unguarded door.

A temple with a living key
To which the suppliant genius bears
A song, a flame, an ecstasy,
A soul wherein Apollo shares ;
The shrine we pass all unawares
Our children's children shall adore,
And glory the dead poet wears
Shall guard the else unguarded door.

L'ENVOI

Muse, when thy sacred hearth-light flares
And when thy lovers sing their lore,
Forget not humbler poets' prayers,
And guard the else unguarded door.

TO H. I. S.

A Ballade of Echoes

Perchance the ring of spurs that glitter blue,
Perchance the clarion that riots free
For gleaming battle-axe and bended yew,
Or else the bray of bugles on the lea,
The lover-song of warring chivalry,—
The leaping loves of helmets and of spears,
And echoes of an ancient minstrelsy
May sound in all the silence of the years.

Perchance we all of us have chosen, too,
Some well-loved lyric wherein He or She
Shall sing to us as they our spirits woo
Though they themselves are done with tragedy,—
Perchance these relics of departed glee
May ease remembrance of forgotten tears,
A voice we loved by land or sky or sea
May sound in all the silence of the years.

Or else, perhaps, a lay that once we knew,
A fleeting sparkle of dull Memory,
A tale of deeds our pulses leapt to do,
A lift of lands our eyes have strained to see,—
A wraith of former Singing-yet-to-be
May find a place within our future ears
And living phantoms of dead melody
May sound in all the silence of the years.

L'ENVOI

Ah, minstrel, weave us then a melody
Wherein no fickle Ghost of Time appears
Where songs forgotten, with the songs to be,
May sound in all the silence of the years.

TO F. W. A.

A Ballade of Ping-Pong

She wears a rose-bud in her hair
To mock me as it tosses free,
Were I more wise or she less fair
I know that I should never be
A victim to such witchery,
For at her wiles and lovely arts
I'm forced to laugh with her, while she
Plays ping-pong with my heart of hearts.

The play's the thing: I wonder where
What courtier with what courtesy
First played it with what lady fair
To music of what minstrelsy? —
I wonder, did he seem to see
Such eyes, wherein a sun-beam starts,
And did he love (as I) while she
Played ping-pong with his heart of hearts?

For battledore they called it, there
In courts of gilded gallantry,
No lover ever lived to dare
To doubt its airy potency,
But now that all the majesty
Of those dead emperors departs,
I dream that she, in memory,
Plays ping-pong with my heart of hearts.

L'ENVOI

Ah, maiden, I must sail a sea
Whereof there are no maps or charts;
Wilt thou sail too, and there with me
Play ping-pong with my heart of hearts?

TO W. R. R.

The Ballade of Unwritten Tales

Sweet, when we count the tales we love, and say,—
These are the poets' dearest, these we hold
Our richest relics of Romance's day,
Our golden fragments from a past of gold —
Forget not, Sweet, the hearts that now are cold,
Whose ancient passions burned alert and strong,
The hearts that now the mists of time enfold,
The loves that ne'er were woven into song.

Before us glides the pageant's deep array
Of luring Beauty in her wonder stoled,
Of battle bright and clashing dark affray,
Of lovers pale that in the night are bold,
Of vows and deaths and crowns and glories old,
Of faith betrayed, and choice foredoomed to
wrong —

Yet statelier pageants lie beneath the mold :
The tales that ne'er were woven into song.

How few we follow in Romance's way ;
How many to Oblivion were sold
That in as noble paths had learned to stray,
That lived as free in castle, cot, or wold,—
As rich in strife, as daring to uphold
Defenceless honour : what a goodly throng
Have dreamed and loved and died, with lives un-
told :

The dreams that ne'er were woven into song.

L'ENVOI

Sweet, let me make for thee some antic lay
That in the silent night hath lain too long—
Full of warm kisses and of foes to slay :
A tale that ne'er was woven into song.

TO L. M.

Here ends *The Morning Road*, as written by
Thomas Wood Stevens and Alden Charles Noble.
Of this edition two hundred copies on paper and
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